

MY TRIP TO MATHERAN

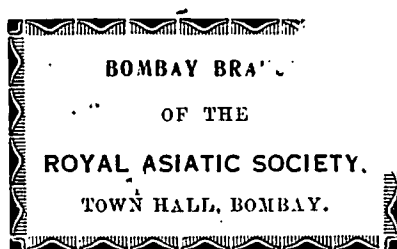
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MY TRIP TO MATHERAN

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BY

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AUTHOR OF

"RAMBLES IN NORTHERN INDIA,"

"TRUTH BETTER THAN FICTION,"

&c., &c.

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To my Matheran friends I dedicate this little volume in the hope that when they read it, they will think kindly of its author, and will consider that I have done some justice to the most unique, and one of the most beautiful hill stations in India.

FRANCESCA H. WILSON.

April 1888.





MY TRIP TO MATHERAN.

I HAVE so often been asked to write an account of Matheran, that for the good of the general public, I have promised to do what I can to make the place better known.

This time last year, I was trying in vain to get the information I shall now endeavour to impart; no one that I met in my part of India could tell me anything of Matheran, and I started for the hill utterly ignorant as to many essential points that it would have been invaluable to me to know. A journey such as I had (over one thousand miles) is not to be despised: I had the most comfortable "family" carriage belonging to the Madras

Railway Company which *en passant* certainly deserves a short description.

The carriage is a long one, with accommodation for four people only, so there is no crowding, and having no table in the centre is a great advantage. There is a verandah at one end, where the entrance door is, and it is very pleasant to sit out there when not too hot, and enjoy the scenery as the train tears along. The seats are softly cushioned, and slide up and down, forming a comfortable couch when desired; between each seat is a polished teakwood table that folds when not wanted, against the side of the carriage. There are several electric bells, so that the servants (who are in a comfortable compartment at the end of the carriage) can be summoned at a moment's notice, the bells all communicating with the servants' room. The dressing-room is a good size, and contains cushioned seats, a hanging cupboard, shelves, a china basin, and several other useful articles of furniture. The teakwood

carving and ornamentation of these carriages is very fine, the ventilation excellent, and the motion is felt far less than in other carriages, owing to India rubber being attached I believe, to the springs. When the venetians are up at night, and the blue silk curtain is drawn over the entrance door, one is entirely private, and can sleep soundly on the soft broad couches that are so refreshing to the tired traveller. The builder of these fine carriages, and of the comfortable new ordinary saloon carriages which are excellent and well appointed is Mr. Trevithick, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Madras Railway Volunteers, his admirable work is above all praise, and speaks for itself. I had to make the usual halt at Arkonam where I found the rest is by no means so disagreeable as I was led to expect. The fine large rooms provided by the Madras Railway Company for the use of the public are extremely comfortable: the ladies' bedroom is a long room with six cots in it, and there are punkabs, dressing tables,

baths and every comfort, while the charge is most moderate, one rupee a day per head, and a respectable person is there to wait on the ladies.

The butler provided excellent food according to order, and at 6-30 P.M., I and my party descended to the fine large dining hall below stairs, where we enjoyed a really comfortable dinner, and we ate at leisure as the train did not start again till 7-30. There is much to interest on the journey from Arkonam to Raichur, notably the curious old forts that one longs to explore. The one at Gooty holds a commanding position, being 970 feet above the level of the surrounding country, and it is I believe, 2,000 feet above the level of the sea, and can be seen for miles before the train approaches it. Between Adoni and Kosgi the rocky formations are truly wonderful, the singular and grotesque shapes of the rocks are well worth seeing, and delight and astonish the geologist. Raichur, the junction with the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, is

famous for its ancient fort which is in fair preservation, it is renowned in Hindu and Mussulman history, and dates back many hundreds of years, when it did good service to the then rulers of the country. Raichur is a dreadfully hot place, and here I had the misfortune to be obliged to leave the fine "family" carriage kindly provided for me by the Madras railway authorities, and through a mistake on my part, I found that the G. I. P. authorities had sent no especial carriage for me.

Imagine therefore my disgust when I had to travel in a compartment of one of the ordinary first class saloon carriages. The accommodation seemed to me wretched, no sliding seats, no tables, no ornamentation, plain ugly boards as in a second class carriage, and the dressing-room a narrow strip, so narrow one can hardly get in and out, and I can't imagine what a very stout person would do, it would I should say be a case of sticking half way! The heat was dreadful

after leaving Raichur, and the closeness of the carriage after the ease and comfort of the large and airy one I had left made me quite ill. I took care on my return journey not to be so circumstanced again, by giving due notice, and through the civility of the G. I. P. Railway authorities, I was enabled to have one of their "family" carriages, which though inferior to the M. R. "family" carriage, not nearly so handsome, nor so comfortable, is a great improvement on the ordinary first class accommodation. There is no ornamentation in these carriages; the dressing-room with a bath in it, and the servants' room are of a good size, rendering the travellers' sleeping and sitting-room less roomy, while the centre is filled by a table, under which there is a tank for ice, but having no sliding seats is a great drawback.

To return to my subject, after several hours of terrible suffering from the heat, rendered bearable only by the ice I had brought with me, we began to ascend the

plateau on which stands Poona, and the cool breezes gave us new life. The descent of the Bhore ghaut in the early morning light was very beautiful, we passed through the pretty inviting looking station of Lonauli soon after daybreak ; it is situated at the top of the Bhore ghaut, and is over 2,000 feet above sea level, it owns a good hotel and several public buildings. Next came Khandalla, a favorite military sanitarium from which the scenery is very fine, it also possesses a good hotel, often the refuge of newly married couples.

One never tires of admiring the beauties of the Bhore ghaut, and hardly less so the masterly engineering work which the G. I. P. Railway Company may well be proud of ; that and the Thull Ghaut (which is the more beautiful of the two) are records of extraordinary perseverance and skill on the part of the Engineers and Surveyors who designed and carried out these stupendous works. As one glides smoothly down the Bhore ghaut

incline (a distance of between fifteen and sixteen miles in length, and from base to summit 1,831 feet in elevation) one can but faintly and imperfectly realize the enormous difficulties, anxieties and cost of an undertaking, that has brought a broad gauge railway up the well nigh inaccessible scarps of a great mountain range, an achievement that took eight years to accomplish. There are twenty-six tunnels, eight viaducts, and half way down there is a good reversing station ; the entire execution of this wonderful work is simply splendid, and is immensely interesting to all those of an engineering turn of mind.

Shortly after we reached the foot of the incline our troubles were ended, and we were resting in the Waiting-rooms at Narel Railway Station. Narel lies at the foot of the Matheran hill, and considering the number of travellers that occupy these Waiting-rooms on their way to and from Matheran, it is a pity that they are not made more comfortable than they are. There

is no sort of sleeping accommodation, not even a couch, but the Parsee who provides any meal that is required, is obliging and does his best to make people comfortable. Before going to Matheran it is necessary to give notice to the Superintendent there who sends down ponies, or tonjons and coolies to await your arrival at Narel. The road up the ghaut is not fit for carts, so all our baggage had to be carried up by coolies who are paid each 5 annas a trip, and they are bound to carry 40 lbs. weight for that sum, so by weighing the baggage at the Railway station, one is spared complaints from the coolies as to the weight being excessive.

In the evening we left Narel, a large village famed as being the birthplace of Nana Sahib, and ascended the Matheran hill, the distance being between seven and eight miles. The road is not at all steep until half way up; the latter part has been left very much as it was originally traced by Major Peacock, and is steep and zig-zags a good deal. The scenery

then becomes beautiful, but the bearers allow but little time for enjoying it, as they hurry up the steeps in a surprising manner. It was nearly dark by the time we neared our destination, and all I could see was that we were passing through an apparently interminate wood, and very soon "darkness became visible." We went on for some time in this way, and wondered how the bearers could find the road, when we passed a solitary lamp in a gateway, and by the board above saw it was the entrance to the Grand View Hotel. We then knew we were in Matheran, but on we went in greater darkness than ever, till we entered the compound of the Rugby Hotel, where the numerous bungalows brilliantly lighted, gave us a cheering welcome, and soon we were making ourselves very comfortable in the best of these detached houses after our long journey.

Before starting from home, I had written to a house-agent in Bombay asking him to recommend to me a house in Matheran ;

he advised me to go first to an Hotel, and then to choose for myself; I followed his advice, and after remaining six days in "the Rugby," where we were very comfortable, we went into a good bungalow, from whence we had a fine view of Bombay, which by rail is distant fifty six miles from Matheran, and as the crow flies is I should say about thirty miles. From our house we could distinctly see the light house, shipping and buildings, and there was nothing between us and the sea to intercept the delicious breeze which is the life of Matheran.

I was much exercised before going there as to what sort of clothes I should wear; I did not know what kind of climate it was, and all I could gather from house-agents and hotel-keepers was, that it was "neither very hot nor very cold"! I soon discovered before March was out, that though so much north of Madras, and 2,750 feet above sea level, it was decidedly warm. In April and May it was warmer still, though

the evenings and nights were fairly cool, but light materials such as Nun's veiling and washing dresses are most suitable for such a climate. This comparative heat (absolutely nothing of course compared to the plains) is literally the only real drawback to Matheran which is entirely unique in its beauty and varied charms. Now to describe it is far from an easy task, but if I succeed half as well as my subject deserves, I am sure many who read this "Trip to Matheran" will make up their minds to try and spend there, as pleasant a three months as it was my good fortune to do.

In describing the form of the hill I cannot do better than quote from Dr. J. T. Smith, who in his book on the people, plants and animals of Matheran says: "Matheran itself, meaning the table-land, could not have been more aptly named. The form of the hill is altogether irregular and does not bear comparison with anything familiar. It is written of Columbus, that, when Queen

Isabella asked him to give a description of Jamaica the only mode of illustration he could think of was, to crumple a piece of paper in his hand, and, opening it out, to place it before her : so for Matheran—were a very unshapely Jerusalem artichoke or root of ginger at hand, either might, with a little paring to represent the flat laterite-capped central ridges, be fitly enough used for a similar object."

This is a very graphic description of the formation of the hill, but to give an idea of the place generally, I must tell you it is like an enormous wood or jungle, with seventy miles of roads cut through it: the stranger who starts out for a walk imagines he is alone in the mountain solitudes, with no dwelling near him, he is charmed with the varied foliage, and splendid trees gnarled with age, that he frequently passes, each turn in the winding road discovers more and more beauties, avenues of lofty trees forming arched roofs, and sometimes peeps of the

low country, one and all delight him, but what is his surprise when he hears close to him (either above or below) the sounds of laughter it may be, or of a matrimonial squabble! For the first time he is made aware that there are houses everywhere, and he very soon learns to modulate the tone of his voice when on other occasions, walking with and talking to a companion. The heat prevents ladies calling during the day time, there being no carriages, but soon after 4 P.M. the visiting commences, either on foot, or on horseback, or in a tonjon. The hour for calling over, people resort either to the Gymkhana, or to the various "Points" (that are literally points) in most cases at the numerous spurs of the hill, overlooking the most awful precipices. The stranger's astonishment when first he visits these places is extreme; he walks along, guided by the numerous sign posts, little thinking what is in store for him, he sees no opening in the wood until close on to the point, when suddenly he finds himself

with the grandest scenery in front of him. If unaccustomed to such giddy heights, he proceeds with caution, hardly daring to look below, in fact is not at all sorry, but greatly comforted and relieved to find himself safely seated on one of the comfortable seats generally to be found at these points.

The Porcupine Point is one of the most trying to a giddy head, its somewhat steep shelving ledge narrows till there is only room for two people to stand abreast, with fearful drops in front and on either side of them. The view from there is surpassingly beautiful; the picturesque and remarkable range of the Bava Melang or the "Saint's Hill" lies in front separated from Matheran by a valley that is a mass of undulations. Further to the left is the "Cathedral Rock" the formation of which resembles a Cathedral, and beyond again, as far as the eye can reach are ranges of hills, one above the other. The sea is clearly visible with steamers &c. going in and out of Bombay harbour, and from Por-

cupine as well as Louisa Point, I have witnessed one of the sights peculiar, I believe, to Matheran. Just as the sun is preparing to sink below the horizon, it assumes the form of various articles of household use, sometimes a flower vase, a cup and saucer, a butter dish, a jug, a tumbler &c., and it changes from one shape to another until it is lost to view. It is really a most extraordinary sight, and one I have nowhere else seen, the cause of this phenomenon must be clouds that at times are barely visible even with glasses. The Bava Melang mountains are one of the most striking features in the Matheran scenery; the form of the "Saint's Hill" is both grand and beautiful, its peak towers above the lesser hills, rising almost precipitously from the undulating ground below, and presents in the evening and morning lights a spectacle worth going any distance to see. Its hues vary as the day advances, sometimes grey, sometimes blue or violet, but ever beautiful, ever an

object to be gazed at with rapture by the true and ardent artist.

Louisa Point is another wonderful spot; it is a plateau, narrowing at the end, and owns some of the worst precipices in Matheran. Among them there is a perfectly round column of rock which is flat on the top, and joined to the plateau by a narrow ledge, truly a horrible place, yet I once saw a horseman sitting on his horse, which was standing in the middle of the smooth grassy top of the column, with only about two feet or so between him and the fearful drop on all sides, excepting the narrow ledge over which when retracing his steps he had to cross. I watched him almost breathless with horror expecting to see some shocking catastrophe, and to my relief saw him dismount, he had evidently thought better of his rash act. From Louisa Point the view is somewhat the same as from Porcupine Point, but takes in features in the vast landscape unseen from the latter. The sheer precipices at various other places opposite are well seen

from Louisa Point, as also the sea, and the great valley of the Panvel river with its salt pans, all of which when lit up by the sun make a lovely scene, and one almost too bright to look at. In the foreground is the huge Prábul hill, called the "Flat stronghold" both suitable names, as the top of the hill is perfectly flat, and it was once the scene of fierce conflicts during the Mahratta war. The remains of old redoubts are still clearly visible from Louisa Point, the distance being only about four or five miles. The top of the hill is well wooded, and there is one hut or house there, the roof of which is seen among the trees, there are wild gorges and chasms running from the summit of the hill to the bottom, which during the rains must look doubly grand and imposing.

Little Chowk Point, supposed to be formed like a sphinx, is very dangerous at the end, and it requires a strong head, and good nerve to stand there, and look over the drop at the original Chowk Point below. This place

reached now, as in Lord Elphinstone's days, by a somewhat dangerous and narrow path, which goes through the Ram Bagh, one of the fine old forests containing splendid mangoes, and other trees. This was one of the picnic places in the early days of Matheran, but is seldom used now, being so much out of the way, and the path so steep and trying. Little Chowk commands a magnificent view of the plains of the Konkan with its many hills, and the Syhadri range pierced by the Bhore Ghaut, as also Khandalla, the houses of which can be seen in the sunlight. The Varosha forest is on the other side of Chowk Point above which is the "One-tree hill," a most wonderful formation of rock, a huge pillar as high as Matheran, rising from the plains, with a solitary Jambul tree on its summit; the pillar is connected with the Matheran hill below and can only with difficulty and great nerve be ascended. There is a path running down towards it, and through the Varosha forest; up this path in 1852 was

carried Mrs. Malet the first lady who ever visited Matheran hill. In 1850 her husband first explored the hill, in the end of the same year he again made the ascent, taking provisions, and causing a hut to be built on the ground now occupied by the Rugby Hotel, later on he returned for the third time, and this time he built more huts, and erected the first stone house which is now standing, called "The Byke." When Mrs. Malet was first carried up the hill, it is said her eyes were blindfolded, so that she should not be alarmed at the frightful places over which she was brought, and only when she had passed the "One-tree hill" and was safely at the summit was the handkerchief removed from her eyes, when she must indeed have been surprised and pleased at the scene that lay before her. From this part is seen the Isálgad hill, the end of which is like a pinnacle, while the whole form of the hill resembles a T, this, like many other of the lower hills around Matheran, is a great feature in the wonderfully

striking and beautiful scenery. There is another of the nearer hills that calls for remark, it is to the left of Isálgad and is low, square, and exactly resembles a large fort with fallen towers at the corners.

There are sixteen Points, and it is difficult to say which is the best, though most people would give the palm to Panorama Point from which the view is most varied and panoramic. It is a long spur somewhat in the shape of a salt spoon, the bowl of the spoon being connected with the hill by a narrow ledge which resembles the handle. It looks down on Narel on one side, and on Bava Melang, and the extraordinary spurs that lie between it and Matheran on the other, it is hard to say where the truly magnificent view ends, so extensive is it. There is a pretty sheltered spot in the bowl of the spoon where picnics take place, and one is glad to get in there and feel safe for a time from the terrifying precipices. This Point is some distance off and is approached by a good pathway cut on

the side of the hill, but very trying to a weak head, and the high winds that prevail at that height, and in that exposed part, make it all the more nervous work, especially if being carried. For my part I own I was frightened out of my wits, expecting every instant to be blown over, besides which in many places a mistake on the part of my bearers would have meant death or a very serious accident.

Time would fail me to tell of Echo ; Landscape ; Artist ; Bava Melang ; charming Hart Point with its lovely approach ; Ghárbut Point so wild, so grand, with a long low spur of hillocks running down into the plains ; the Alexandra Point with a better view of the same strange hillocks, and of the Ram Bagh ; but one more point “ last not least ” I must mention, the Barry Point, named and opened on May 28th, 1887, and made by Dr. Andrew Barry, the present Superintendent of Matheran. He has done much to improve the place ; Artist, Bava Melang and Khanda Points were opened by him, and this last

acquisition to Matheran, Barry Point, is an immense triumph. It commands a magnificent view on the Narel side of the hill and towards the Syhadri mountains, and has two good approaches ; the name it bears will ever mark the reign of (it is said, and deservedly so) the most popular Superintendent Matheran has known. It must be very difficult to be popular in such a place where the society is so mixed, people of all professions and creeds, one and all looking to the Superintendent for everything. He is everybody, Doctor in charge of the Dispensary and of the place ; Magistrate ; Librarian ; Treasurer ; he has charge of the roads ; forests ; water works ; gymkhana, and even the hired ponies and saddles are brought up for his inspection on muster days. His life must be a burden to him at times, when worried by "unprotected females," and others complaining of trifles that to them are matters of great importance. It is almost impossible to please everybody, but few people please so generally

as does Dr. Barry, who, with his good wife is very hospitable to every one. The Gymkhana is a great success, this owes much to Dr. Barry's energy and supervision, it is well managed, and pays well in spite of most moderate charges : there are several excellent tennis courts, some beautifully shaded for morning, and others for evening use, and it is really a charming spot ; it has a covered pavilion with seats inside as well as many outside, some under the trees, some in the open. The Library is a small building with seats in the verandah, where ladies are often to be seen reading, and watching the passers by, it is well supplied with good books and periodicals.

The water supply in Matheran is good, there are several fine drinking water springs, the best being Malet's Spring : the Charlotte Lake, (the water of which is used for household purposes) has a water-shed of some extent, it is a splendid piece of engineering, and a sight well worth seeing ; the end of it is built up by a solid masonry wall of 80 feet high, and from

this place the view is fine, but finer and more beautiful still from Danger Point close by, a place only to be approached when one is well accustomed to the precipices, especially if one walks the whole length of the point. It is strange how brave one becomes after a time, and how one laughs at the thought of the fuss one made at first about the spots that afterwards one passes without the slightest fear.

Near Danger Point is a shrine very sacred to the Matheran hill tribes; Pisharnáth lived hundreds of years ago, and was a hermit said to be very holy. At his shrine is a large stone painted red, and it is said to have grown to its present size from being quite small; the poor ignorant natives worship this, and a European is not allowed to enter the enclosure, the ground near is covered with feathers of fowls offered in sacrifice to Pisharnáth; there is a gong which is rung on feast days by the officiating priest who is a Dhangur, one of the three hill tribes of that part of India, the

other two being the Thákurs, and the Kát-karis. The dress or rather undress of the Thákur women is most peculiar, and at first sight one takes them for men, as they wear no skirt whatever, their legs being bare as in the case of a man. Round their loins they have a quantity of cloth tightly bound, which doubtless is a great support to their backs when climbing the almost inaccessible paths they frequent. It is marvellous to see these people coming up paths so narrow there is barely room for their feet; paths worn, right on the sides of the precipices where there appears to be no footing for even a monkey, yet these women daily bring large loads of grass from below, which is used for thatching, and for making the hurdles that are placed against the walls of all the buildings in Matheran, when the season is over, and the rains have begun.

I stayed up rather late, that is, some days after the break of the monsoon on the 4th June, and witnessed scenes I have never seen

in any part of India I had previously visited. The rainfall at Matheran is 250 inches, and has been known to be nearly double this, and all this in four months ; the rain therefore comes down in earnest, and what struck me as so strange and weird, was, the darkness during the daytime even when the fog was not excessive, the sudden loss of the sunlight made the darkness more apparent, and though I am accustomed to the fogs of the Nilgiris, and the Himalayas, they seemed nothing to those at Matheran, where the obscurity reminded one of a dense London fog without the yellow. Directly this begins the exodus commences and one feels it is time to depart, especially as the most horrible long legged spiders come out of the ground in millions ; our walls were black with them, and it was no use slaying them, as more took their places at once, fortunately they do not run fast, so if one is approaching, time is sufficient to make an end of him. As we left the place with many regrets, we saw all the houses so familiar

to us shut up from view ; no windows, no doors to be seen, only the roofs with the walls all cased in grass tatties or hurdles, it was a most depressing sight, but our thoughts were intent on getting away ourselves, and great is the hurry skurry of that time. Tonjons, palanquins and coolies are engaged days before they are required, and then it is hard to get them, as the rush is so great, every one wanting to get away first : I felt no such desire and stayed up till almost the last—the *last* means when Dr. Barry the Superintendent departs, by then the Post Office, bazaars, and all shops have closed, and only the Dispensary remains open with the Assistant Superintendent who is a Hospital Assistant in charge.

With regard to shops, Matheran is badly off ; there are two or three oilman store shops, and one so-called milliner's shop kept by a most obliging old "character" Moonjee, who is the best of all the shop keepers ;⁷ Bombay being so near, people chiefly send there for what they need, there is no chemist's shop,

At simple medicines can be procured at the dispensary, men servants can be picked up without much trouble, but as a foundation I took three servants with me: I engaged five coolies or hamals who for a remuneration of Rs. 10 each a month, carried me about in my Tonjon which was light, cleaned the rooms, fetched firewood, went messages, and did general coolie work. Firewood is bought most reasonably from Government at the "office" (which means public offices) costing only Re. 1 for 1,000 lbs. weight: food is cheap, small but good mutton is had for 3 to 4 annas a pound, beef for less, English vegetables are rather scarce and dear. Water is paid for usually by the bullock load, but I paid the Mafla belonging to our house Rs. 9 a month to bring me from Charlotte Lake sufficient water for our party of three besides servants, the same man supplied me with eight bottles of milk for the rupee, the two Matheran servants I employed received each Rs. 12.

There are a very large number of houses in Matheran, some of the cheaper ones are wretched abodes, but for Rs. 550 to 700 for the season one can get a very nice house ; some of the very expensive ones are very good indeed, notably Elphinstone Lodge which was built by Lord Elphinstone in 1885, this was before the virtues of Mahableshwar were discovered, in the early days of Matheran it was quite the fashion and Lord Elphinstone loved the place. To my mind however one of its great charms is the absence of officialdom, so evidently think some of the "big wigs" of Bombay who year after year patronize this charming place. A new house has been built called Cragieburn the owner is a Parsee, it is a very large fine house with a great deal of glass about it, and is extremely handsomely furnished, it is well worth a visit and is generally empty, but just at the end of last season it was let for Rs. 800 for a fortnight, rather a large sum to pay for

so short a time, but the gentleman who so paid was a happy bridegroom !

The Parsees abound during the height of the season, and I should think the time when Matheran may be most enjoyed would be in the winter ; in April and May the place becomes very full, and the reckless horsemen one meets jeopardize one's existence, and sadly spoil the quiet of the place. Added to this the horsekeepers of the hired ponies, which are very numerous, gallop along the somewhat narrow roads taking the ponies to and from the houses where they are hired ; it not only is a most dangerous habit, but a cruel one, as the wretched ponies become tired before they are mounted by the hirers, who seldom spare the poor " tats " but expect to get their money's worth, a rupee a ride, in the shape of hard riding. Once I was nearly done for by being very nearly over-ridden by two horsekeepers racing their ponies home ; I reported the matter to the Superintendent who punished the men, after which a decided

improvement took place in the speed of the returning ponies.

There are hundreds of monkeys in Matheran, they are very tame, and it seems a great shame that people should shoot the poor harmless animals ; they used to come every day and drink out of a large cask of water close to our house where the garden water was stored, and would sit for hours off and on on a wall near it watching our movements, they knew quite well they were safe in our compound, for no one ever molested them. Matheran is supposed to be absolutely free from malaria ; the sanitary arrangements are excellent, and the very heavy rains assist to make it one of the most healthy spots in India. In the cold weather after the excessive humidity has disappeared, it is a delightful climate and fires are welcome ; at that season a southern aspect for a house would be agreeable, but when choosing a house for the summer season, my advice is to choose one with a northern aspect, well open to the sea breeze.

There is one great want in Matheran that could I fancy be easily supplied, that is a treasury or bank of some sort ; it is at times very difficult indeed to get change for notes or a cheque, and great inconvenience arises therefrom, Dr. Barry does his utmost in this as in all things, but he is I think far too much limited in power, and his funds are short. He has however done wonders in clearing off to a great extent, the financial deficit he found when taking up his appointment two years ago ; and there is one suggestion I would make, that if carried out, would at once increase the local funds, namely to levy a tax every year of, say 1 Rupee per head, on each European, Parsee, Jewish or native gentleman and lady, 8 annas on each "second," and one anna on each native. These sums if thought too large could be reduced to 8 annas, 4 annas, and 6 pies respectively ; they could be paid into the "Office" after arrival, poorer natives paying before entering the station ; the tax is so small, it could not be incon-

venient to those who pay it, while the income realized thus would go far to make many excellent improvements in this already charming place. I do not know if my suggestion will meet the approval of my Matheran friends, but I trust it may do so for the sake of the place I think so lovely. In March, April, and May, two clergymen take it in turns to take the Sunday Services, coming up from Bombay on purpose ; the church is a pretty one both inside and outside, and is built on the great central plateau where some of the early huts were built, there are a few lonely graves in the churchyard below.

The most remarkable views from bungalows are those from Mr. Jefferson's house on the Chowk Road, (truly a magnificent site has it, with Isálgad and Prábal "the stronghold" prominent objects in the foreground scenery) and the gorge view from Rajasthan the opposite end of the hill. This house stands near the edge of a precipice which is undermined, and during a thunderstorm

this must be an awful place to be in, as the electric fluid is generally attracted by the rocks, and runs up the mountain gorges. From Rajasthan are seen Panorama and Hart Points, and to the left the beautifully wooded side of the hill which with its variegated tints resembles an exquisite bouquet. There are several hotels, the best are the Rugby, Pinto's Hotel, Grand View and the Clarendon, these are all during the season more or less full, at times crowded. The old Chowk Hotel (the first opened) has been closed for about two years, and is fast falling into decay ; this is a pity, as it was well and most expensively built by Mr. Arthur Crawford of the Bombay Civil Service, and it must have been perfect in its day, it is sad to see it now, and the once pretty garden deserted ; at the back is a large plateau where picnics still take place, and sports are held, and not far from there, is the old Gymkhana ground now looking very *triste* and forsaken. Built by Mr. Arthur Crawford is another house worthy of remark, the

Bee Hive, it has a double roof, and must consequently be very cool, the floors are inlaid most ingeniously with fragments of broken crockery, the effect is very pretty and looks clean and the garden is well kept up, there are many other peculiar as well as handsome houses, especially those built by Jews or Parsees.

The latter seem a most happy prosperous people, crowds of them are continually to be met with at the various points; and they seem to enjoy themselves thoroughly ever laughing, ever joking, and the rich and varied colors of the handsome silk cloths and jackets of the Parsee ladies make a picturesque scene look doubly picturesque. They are evidently not of timid natures, they do not appear to know what fear is, for they stand and sit on the very brink of the most giddy heights, with their feet almost hanging over the yawning chasms.

Moonlight at Matheran is strangely glorious, far more so than in other places, owing

to the deep shadows of the forest glades, the winding mountain paths bordered by lofty arched trees, permitting only a fitful light, all so peaceful, so mystical, while in the open spots the valley of the Panvel, Bombay Harbour, and the sea beyond lit up brilliantly, with the nearer objects Bava Melang and Prábul, &c., standing out in strong relief, make a picture never to be forgotten by a lover of God's beautiful nature such as I am, and often and often my heart rose in praise and thankfulness to the Great Maker of all this wondrous beauty. The artist revels in such scenes, the musician loves the poetry of them, for who can better appreciate the beautiful than those whose souls are full of music? To conclude, I found the Bombay people most kind and sociable, and many were the friends I made among them, for though a stranger, and from another Presidency, I was welcomed kindly, and pressed to repeat my visit, a pleasure, which though in the future, I yet hope may one day be realized.

THE END.



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